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A TWO THOUSAND MILE STAGE RIDE.

BY H. D. BARROWS.

(Read at a Pasadena Meeting, Feb. 4, 1896.)

Thirty-five years ago it was the good fortune of myself and wife to ride over the Butterfield route, which was, I believe, the longest and best conducted stage route in the world. The distance from San Francisco, by way of Los Angeles, El Paso, Fort Chadbourne, Fort Smith, to St. Louis, as indicated by the schedule of stage stations, was 2881 miles, or from Los Angeles, 2391 miles. I bought our two tickets for \$400, gold, at the overland stage office, which was located where the Roeder Block, on Spring street now stands; and we boarded the delayed stage, (delayed by heavy rains and a snow storm in the Tehachape mountains,) from San Francisco, which arrived at the Bella Union, now the St. Charles Hotel in this city, at about 10 o'clock Monday night, December 17, 1860.

We traveled day and night by stage for about eighteen days and five hours, arriving at Smithton, Missouri, the terminus of the railway, to St. Louis, on the morning of January 5, 1861; and at St. Louis, on the evening of the same day. Of course the journey was somewhat tedious, but this was more than compensated for by the incidents and variety of scenery of the vast stretch of country passed through, and really, the weariness of stage travel was less disagreeable, than sea-sickness, etc., by water, as we had occasion to realize on our return trip, by way of the Isthmus. Prior to the establishment of the overland stage route, a trip from Los Angeles to the Atlantic States usually occupied about four weeks; it could not be made in much less time, even with close connections by steamer. But by the stage and rail route, including a stop of two days at St. Louis, we were enabled to see the great tragedians, Booth and Charlotte Cushman, in Shakspeare's "Merchant of Venice," at the Academy of Music in Philadelphia, twenty-three days after we left Los Angeles. About twenty days traveling time across the continent, and mostly by stage, we thought then, was not bad time.

Encouraged and subsidized by the United States Government for the carrying of the mails, John Butterfield of Missouri, a veteran stage man, with others, established the overland stage line between St. Louis and Memphis, and San Francisco, via Los Angeles, in 1858, making trips at first twice weekly, each way; and subsequently six times a week, receiving, I believe, from the government, under the later contract, \$1,000,000, annually. The first stage from the East, (Memphis,) arrived in Los Angeles, October 7, 1858. A driver and conductor accompanied each stage, and they always went armed through the hostile Indian country. The

stations were usually ten to fifteen miles, and occasionally twenty to twenty-five miles apart.

A condensed summary of the itinerary of our journey may not be without interest.

Leaving Los Angeles, Monday, we reached the Colorado river on Thursday, meeting a stage from the East on the desert, and one about every two days thereafter. At first it was not easy to get much sleep, but after a couple of days out, we could sleep without difficulty, either day or night. At Fort Yuma, we took on a through passenger, Lieut. McCaul of the regular army, who went to Tennessee, and afterwards, I suppose, into the Confederate army, though we never heard from him after we parted. Friday morning at daylight we passed the locality where the Oatman massacre occurred. Near here we met a large herd of American cattle bound for California; and soon after we overtook a band of mounted Indians, who at first we thought might be Apaches, but our conductor soon recognized them as friendly Maricopas. They turned out of the road for us to pass them, and returned our greeting in a friendly manner. At Gila Bend, Sutton's ranch, we saw a dead Apache Indian, tied in a standing posture to a tree. He had been shot by Sutton's son, a lad of about fourteen. Mr. Sutton told us that he had come there with sixty head of American cattle and a lot of horses and mules. He had been obliged to send off most of his family to save their lives; the Apaches had cleaned out nearly all his stock, and had done their best to clean him out; they would come around in the night in bands of forty or fifty, and shoot arrows into his house, (which like all the stations and corrals of the stage company in the hostile Indian country were made of stockades, or posts set endwise in the ground, close together;) whilst he and his boys and hired men would pop them over with a rifle ball whenever they could get sight of them. He had expended about \$7,000, he said, in digging a canal from the Gila, in order to get in a crop. Since the Indian had been killed by his son, they had not been so bad. But the heroic old frontiersman was finally compelled to abandon the field. In after years I used to know him and his Indian-fighting son as citizens of El Monte, in this county. It took many years and cost many precious lives, before Crook and Miles made it possible, by the removal, (out of the world or, to another part of the country,) of the bloodthirsty Apaches, for white people to live in safety in any part of Arizona and New Mexico.

On the Saturday after we started, we arrived at Tucson. Here we took on two more through passengers, Mr. Hiram Stevens, afterwards delegate to Congress from Arizona, and his wife, Doña Petra, who were bound for his native place somewhere in Vermont, and they traveled with us as far as Toledo, where we parted for our several destinations. Sunday we went through Apache Pass, where we saw several Apaches about the station; they

were tall, savage looking fellows, dressed mostly in buckskin, the weather being windy and very cold. One young buck had a white woman's bonnet tied on over his head. Some distance beyond the station we saw several wagon trains which had "out-spanned." After our arrival in Philadelphia we saw in the papers that the savages had overcome the teamsters of a train in this pass, chained them to their wagon-wheels and burned them alive!

A mile or two beyond the station, as we emerged from the Pass, we saw a camp of several hundred Apaches that, we understood, had been driven in through fear of the Navajos. This was the last we saw of the Apaches, and we soon left their country behind us.

We reached Mesilla on Monday night, Christmas eve, about dark; the general illumination of the hills in the rear of the town by the miners—a local annual practice, we were told—notified us that it was "Noche Buena." We arrived at El Paso before daylight next morning, where we took an early breakfast. We traveled some distance down the Rio Grande, and then struck across northern Texas, over the greater portion of which, the Comanche Indians ranged. Between these formidable savages and the Texans, the most intense hatred at all times existed, causing that section to remain almost entirely unsettled.

Between Fort Chadbourne and the old abandoned Fort at "Phantom Hill," there is a forty-mile stretch from station to station. On this plain we saw several thousand buffaloes scattered about in squads of from three or four to as many hundreds. It was certainly a grand sight. Several large herds of these shaggy animals ran across our road a short distance ahead of the stage, so that we had a fine opportunity to see them. There were of all sizes, from calves up to the oldest patriarchs. They charged on after their leaders, in solid columns that could not be easily changed or broken. We also saw on this plain abundance of beautiful white-tailed deer, and antelope, and wild turkeys, and one or two wolves.

At Phantom Hill, which had been burned, leaving only a lot of chimneys standing, and a few stone houses, reminding one of the ruins of an ancient city, we arrived on our second Sunday out, at dark; here we were regaled with a grand supper of buffalo steak, venison, etc., and a rousing fire to warm us up for the night's travel, that made us remember the place as we would an oasis in the desert. Only a single family lived here, without neighbors for many miles around. Sunday we passed Fort Belknap, where we heard the Comanches had been committing depredations. Monday, as we drew near the bright thriving town of Sherman, Texas, we began to see cattle running at large on the hills, which was an indication that we were out of the Indian country.

We crossed Red river into the Choctaw or peaceable Indian Territory

on the last day of the year. The next morning was biting cold. We ate breakfast at a large farm house, occupied by two well to-do Choctaw farmers, who dressed and looked like Americans, and who were nearly as white. They had large families. Just as we were leaving, a number of full-boode Indians came out on to the broad veranda, with their Chief. We were told that they were to leave on the next stage after us, en route for Washington, to see their new Great Father, Lincoln, inaugurated.

The Choctaw Indians had made great progress in civilization; they had schools and churches, and we were told, were industrious and intelligent. They made their own laws, their chief officer being called a Judge. We could see signs of thrift and prosperity as we passed through their Territory.

We reached Fort Smith on the 2nd of January, fifteen and a half days from Los Angeles. I was surprised to find Fort Smith a wide-awake, progressive city, having been under the impression that it was little more than a Fort and log-built frontier settlement.

On our journey thus far we had ridden in what were called thorough-brace mud-wagons. But next morning before light, on a Concord stage coach we arrived at Springfield, a larger and handsomer city. Fayetteville was another fine city, that is, it had less of a frontier aspect than one would expect from its location. The next day, the 4th, the weather being very cold, it snowed slightly, this being the first snow we had seen on our whole continental trip, albeit, it was made in midwinter. We now had some difficulty in keeping warm, although the stages were adapted to cold weather by being padded, and they could also be closed tight. However, we wrapped our blankets and shawls and fixings about us, and didn't come any where near freezing. Late that night, or rather about 3 o'clock the next (Saturday) morning, January 5, 1861, we were glad to reach the end of our long stage journey of over 2000 miles, at Smithton, the terminus of the railway to St. Louis. As the regular daily train did not leave till 9 o'clock, a. m., we got about two hours sleep on a bed—the first in eighteen days. While this was very welcome, nevertheless it must not be supposed that we were used up, for we were not, by any means. We took the cars and reached St. Louis between 6 and 7 o'clock that night, eighteen days and twenty hours from Los Angeles. As the train passed along some distance on the bank of the Missouri river, we had an opportunity to see that stream. Next morning we got sight of the vast Mississippi, whose veins and arteries, in a grand system of net-work, extend more than thirty thousand miles. Several of us at least, then saw those two mighty rivers for the first time.

At the Planters' House we found an inn, and rest. Next day, Sunday, we took a warm bath and changed our apparel, somewhat the worse for wear and tear and dust, and we felt as good as new.

After a two days' stay in St. Louis, we went by rail, via Chicago and Pittsburg to Philadelphia, where, for a time our journey was at an end; although we later visited various other Eastern cities. We returned to California, via the Isthmus, the following May.

To many people, doubtless, who think more of their ease than they do of robust physical health, a stage ride of a thousand or two thousand miles, may seem a very formidable undertaking. But for those who have a liking for adventure, and a desire to see something of the world, a long ride of two or three weeks, practically in the open air, not in hot, stuffy cars, possesses a wonderful charm, especially in remembrance, when by the necromancy of idealization we segregate the pleasureable from that which was merely disagreeable, and therefore irrelevant. Such a ride is one of the most effective cures for dyspepsia that can be imagined.

The "Overland Stage" was the precursor of the Continental Railroad; and the interest taken in the former by the statesmen and especially by Southern and Western statesmen of forty years ago, did them infinite credit. As we look back we see that they grasped the situation accurately; they foresaw the importance of opening up direct communication between the distant sections of our common country; and they labored wisely and patriotically, despite much opposition and innumerable obstacles, for the establishment of such direct and systematic intercommunication, first by means of a continental stage line, which they knew would soon be followed by a continental railroad.